

Activity #5 -- Why Working Together is Better

Overview:

This activity is to look at why and how diversity can lead to better decision making.

Objective:

To observe physical data and research on groups to determine why diversity leads to better decision making.

Time Suggested: 20 minutes, depending on discussion.

Step 1:

Begin a discussion by asking the group whether they think groups that are all the same work better or come to better outcomes than groups that are diverse? Why or why not? Have them speak in partners for 2 minutes, then share as a larger group. Next, let the team members know you are going to look at some evidence on whether diverse groups come to better outcomes.

Step 2:

Give out handout and ask students to only look at the brain scans. Ask if they can determine which is the male or female brain. Why do they suspect one or the other?

Step 3:

Walk through the research points, starting with the research that explains the brain scans. Then, move on to discuss the other perspectives on diverse groups. Ask for any final thoughts from the group.

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Diverse Theories on Diversity

The Guardian

“Scientists have drawn on nearly 1,000 brain scans to confirm what many had surely concluded long ago: that stark differences exist in the wiring of male and female brains. Maps of neural circuitry showed that on average women's brains were highly connected across the left and right hemispheres, in contrast to men's brains, where the connections were typically stronger between the front and back regions.”¹

Dr. Ragini Verma, Researcher, University of Pennsylvania:

“Women's brains, on average, had multiple connections between left and right hemispheres, which control logic and intuition. The female brain map looked like an especially intense version of the kid's game Cat's Cradle. That cross-hemisphere wiring suggests women are able to engage and connect various parts of the brain simultaneously.

But men's brains, on average, were wired in an entirely different manner, with connections going from front to back. There was almost no connection between left brain and right brain. This suggests that on average men are predisposed to focus on a single task at a time.

Her findings showed with startling clarity why so many studies have found women are better multitaskers than men ...The two types of brains are 'complementary. It shows that the best outcome is if they (men and women) work together and complement their skills,' Dr. Verma said².”

“Researchers found that single-sex groups were quick to agree with one another, which led to limited, unimaginative ideas. The mixed-sex groups approached the problem from multiple viewpoints, resulting in far more inventive solutions³.

“In one of our studies, we compared homogeneous and diverse groups trying to solve a murder mystery. The diverse groups reported that they didn't work together very effectively, and they were less confident about their decisions than the homogeneous groups, yet they consistently outperformed those homogeneous groups.

Moreover, the benefits of diversity were most pronounced when the persons who were different *did not* bring a unique perspective to the table, but instead agreed with one or more of the social majority members. The members of the social majority then turned their focus to the task at hand and were more motivated to deal with it because of the social diversity present. They wanted to reconcile and to understand why some outsider actually agreed. They essentially didn't want to leave without figuring out this apparent incongruence⁴.”

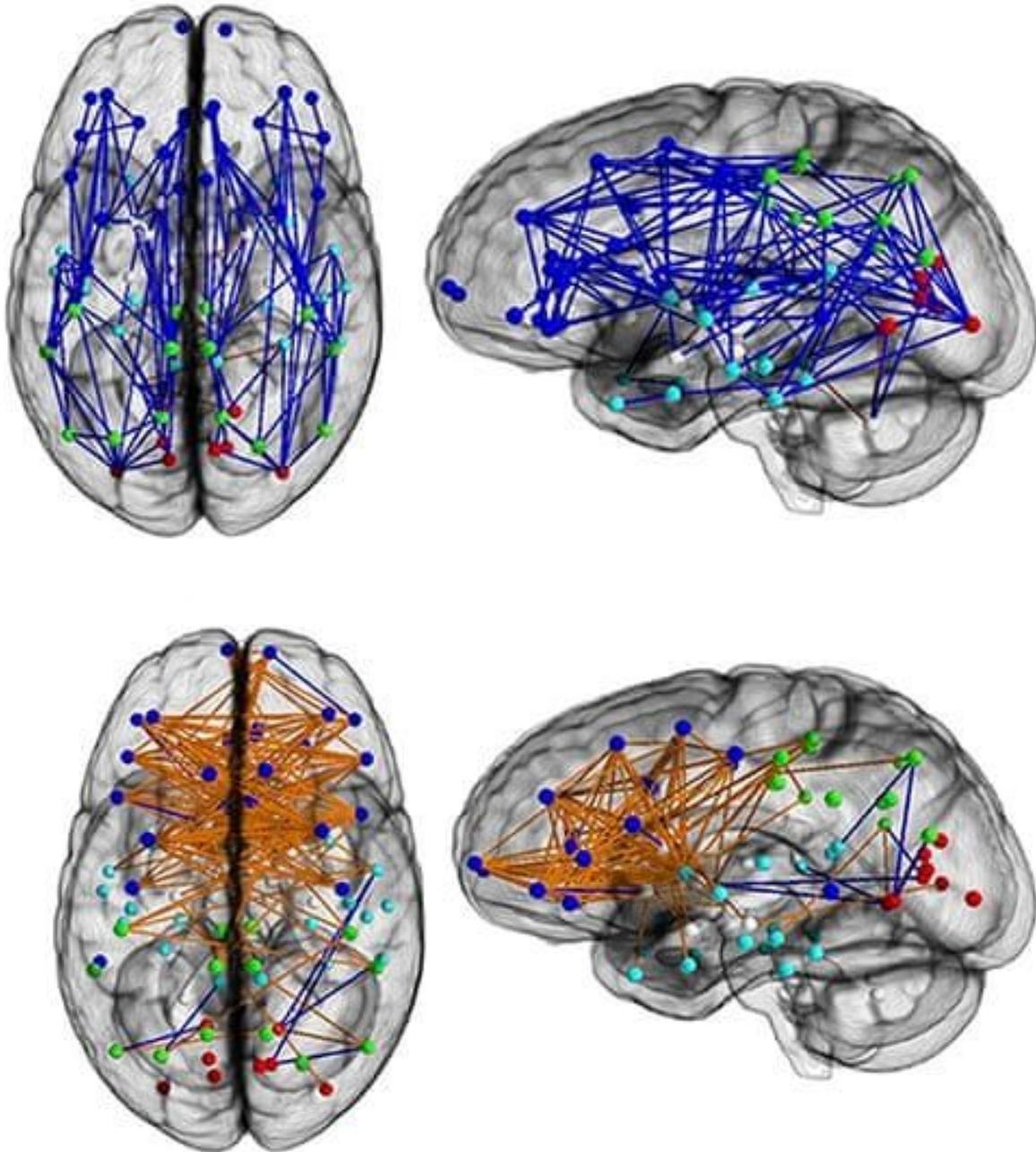
¹ Sample, Ian. “Male and female brains wired differently, scans reveal.” *The Guardian*, December 2, 2013.

² Lipman, Joanne. *That's What She Said*, New York: William Morrow, 2018. p.166

³ Lipman, Joanne. *That's What She Said*, New York: William Morrow, 2018. p33

⁴ Phillips, Katherine. “Diversity Helps Your Business but Not the Way You Think.” *Forbes*, June 2, 2009

Male and Female Brain Scans 3-D, Diffusion Tensor Imaging using an MRI Machine



National Academy of Sciences/PA⁵

⁵ Madhura Ingalhalikar, Alex Smith, Drew Parker, Theodore D. Satterthwaite, Mark A. Elliott, Kosha Ruparel, Hakon Hakonarson, Raquel E. Gur, Ruben C. Gur, and Ragini Verma: *Sex differences in the structural connectome of the human brain* PNAS January 14, 2014 111 (2) 823-828; <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1316909110>

